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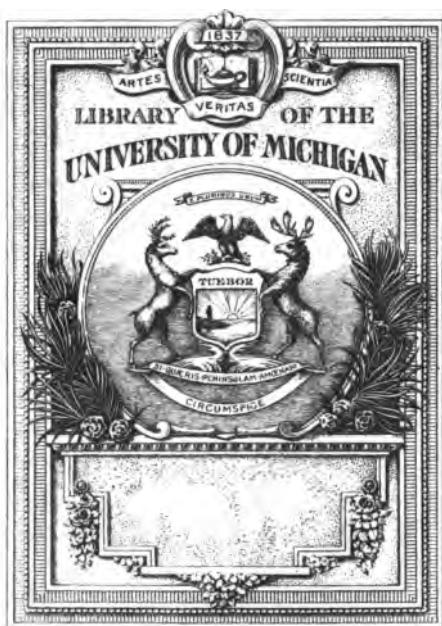
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THE
HISTORY

OF

Tom Dunderhead.



L O N D O N :

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THE HISTORY

OF

Tom Dunderhead.

TOM, as I have read in the most authentick of all Histories that set out weekly by Mr. *Laurence Dunn*, Citizen of *Dublin*, was born at, or near to, *Newcastle upon Tyne*, but under what Planet, or Aspect of the Heavens, I cannot inform my Reader with Exactness, as I am no Way skilled in the Calculation of Nativities; but his Life and Conversation, from the Time he was a Stripling, or what is vulgarly called a *Hobblede-Hoy*, I am at no Loss to relate, having been a careful Observer both of him and the Master he was put Prentice to, from the Date of his Indentures, and not unacquainted with his Behaviour in the Interval before.

His first Appearance on the Theatre of the great World was in the Character of *Captain Tom*, or Head of that most respectable Body of *British* Subjects so well known by the Name of *Mob*, for which Post, or Station, he was perfectly qualified by Nature, being tall in his Person, frantick in his Gestures, and unintelligible in his Speech; in which last Article he improved himself afterwards, and, in my Thinking, much to his Disadvantage; for an Orator, who cannot be understood, can never be confuted, or, when wrapped in Clouds, cannot be seen; but if he clears up, ever so little, you know where to have him; as a Farthing Candle, though of little avail towards lighting up a Room, is sufficient to discover the Person who holds it. But this Misfortune of clearing up did not befall *Tom* so early as to hinder Business, and he topped

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his first Character to Admiration. To do him Justice, he did notable Service to his Owners, and, had he continued in that Station, Things had been ne'er the worse. But, like some others, he mistook his Profession; and, from a Disposition naturally cleaving to the Heart of Man, he would appear in Characters he was least fit for, and undertake the very Business he was least cut out for.

There is a strange Perversity in human Nature. The fattest Fellow I ever knew placed his Ambition in being a good Running-footman; and a pur-blind Gentleman, who could not see to the End of his Nose, was never happy but when driving a Coach with six Horses.

In Pursuance of this lively Opposition to Nature, *Tom*, at all Events, would be a Man of Affairs, Contrivance, and Direction; and cast his Eye, first on one Employment, and then another, about Sir *George English*, who, having vast Demesnes, and great Revenues, in different Counties, kept Abundance of Commissaries, Seneschals, and Clerks for the Management of his Estate, as well as Stewards, Sewers, Ushers, and other Officers, for his domestick Business. It was impossible to fit *Tom* with any Place he could become in this last Department, and he was as much to seek, one would think, how to behave in the other; but there are critical Times, when any Man may do any Thing, if he will but try, and succeed against moral Certainty; and then we say, for Want of better Discernment, that Miracles are not ceased; or else,

There is a Tide in the Affairs of Men,

Which, taken in the Flood, leads on to Fortune —

As some beggarly Poet has it, who never nicked the Tide, or took the right Side of Things, or saw a Bit of Fortune, unless it was her Backside; in *Tom's* Case, however, one or other of these Remarks was verified.

Old Sir *George*, the worthy Father of a worthy Son, both whose Names will for ever be revered, for Honour equal to their Birth, and Honesty superior to their Fortune, had a *Dominus fac totum* in his Family, to whom he confided every Thing. In every Department of Business he had Direction, one *Robin Fingerfee*, a *Norfolk* Man, as Mr. *L. Dunn* rightly observes, but not an Attorney, as he, from others, asserts; for, though he understood most Things, he was bred to nothing. This Multiplicity of Affairs did not puzzle *Robin*, though it might another; but whether it was Whim, or Perverseness, or Banter, or other unlucky Disposition in him, it is certain,

tain, he never employed, with a good Will, in his Master's Business, any but the awkwardest People he could find out; and having pressing Occasion for a Clerk in his out Business, thought he could not do better than take *Dunderhead* as a Prentice. The Event justified his Choice; for *Tom* writ such a gaping Hand, and so without Stops, that the Devil's Hand-writing, mentioned by *Doctor King*, was Print in Comparison to it. This was expressly what the other wanted; to puzzle, perplex, and confound the Intellects and Senses of every Man his Master had Dealings with, being *Robin's* principal Talent and Design. It is somewhere said, if you would have me cry, you must cry first yourself; and with equal Justice it may be added, to be puzzled yourself is the surest Way to puzzle another; at which Work *Tom* was better than his Master, as quickly appeared, and was daily proved, for the Space of sixteen Years, during all which Time, in the fundry Negotiations of *Robin*, and on the Receipts and Answers of one hundred and sixty thousand Letters, written by *Tom*, there was not any Thing done, that any one could tell how, or any Word writ that you could say what, or that could possibly be translated, transposed, tortured, or decyphered into any human Language, Meaning, or Proposition whatever.

All this Bungling was laid on *Robin's* Back, and it was broad enough to bear it. He laughed, and *Tom* puzzled on, chopped and changed, and hoded and podged between them, till Sir *George* the younger was prevailed on to dismiss *Robin*, but forgot, at the same Time, to send *Tom* a packing after him; for though the other knew what he was doing, *Tom* did not.

I have often thought, that it requires as much Genius in Affairs, to be always wrong, as to be always right. As there are curve Lines that have none of the Properties of a Circle, and yet being very like it, are hard to hit; so a clean, uniform Course of proceeding on the Verge, or Precipice of Right, without once stepping over, denotes a strong Head and a sound Judgment. *Robin* possessed this Talent in Perfection, and *Tom*, under his Direction, helped him a good deal; but neither he, or his Brother, could carry on the Scheme properly when left to themselves. They would now and then deviate into Right, and never failed to involve their Master by it, and put him to great Charges before Things could be set wrong again.

Tom, being taken into Place by *Robin*, as I have said, got what he wanted. Wanted in two Senses, for he passionately desired a Place of Difficulty to shew his Parts in, and was not out of the need of one of Profit, to refit the shattered Condition of his Finances by; as, having been very flush when he entered on his first Calling, he squandered away Mints of Money without reckoning it, or thinking his Purse could ever fail him. Both his Wishes were accomplished, in getting an Employment he knew nothing of, and a good Sallary for doing the Business wrong. But it much surprized every Body then, and more since, how he was kept in, to pursue an old Scheme, that it was confessed could be managed by none but the first Contriver.

A *Maitre Larron*, as the *French* term one Kind of clever Fellows, is an esteemable Character; but, to be a Bungler at it, is as bad as being downright honest.

After *Robin's* Dismissal, *Tom* and his Brother set up for themselves, and Sir *George's* Constancy of Temper inclining him to keep old Servants about him as long as possible, *Tom* got himself, by Degrees, into the same Confidence with his Master that *Robin* enjoy'd. To be sure, he looked very big upon it; but it had been impossible for him to hold it, but for a Clerk he had under him, who had Abundance of Tricks in him; and, though one, by looking at him, would not think it, was a notable Fellow at all Kind of Contrivances, and helped *Tom* out of many a Scrape by them, when he was on the Point of Despair, and telling every one about him he was undone. *Rock* (for that was the Clerk's Name) had, indeed, the Appearance of a Spy, from his listening Look, and invincible Taciturnity; but then, he kept Company mostly by Proxy, and paid some pleasant, unsuspected, talkative Blades to take Note of what passed there, to entrap *Tom's* Enemies and his own. Then he had an admirable Talent at what is called making false Noses, and giving a different Appearance to the Face of every Thing: Were it ever so ugly, he would, by an artificial Nose, (as the Nose is a very becoming Part of the Face) quite change all the rest of the Features; and, by this Artifice, *Tom* would make Things appear as he pleased to Sir *George*.

Then he would advise *Tom* of any Designs of getting this or that Man into Sir *George's* Service, that *Tom*, if he did not like him, might set his Honour against him before he saw him, which he had many Ways of doing.

Sir

Sir George delights to see his Acquaintance dressed in Orange or *Brunswick* Colours, as every one has some favourite Colour, and it happened all his true Friends had the same Fancy with his Honour; White, or deep Blue, were always his Aversion, and, of late, his Honour does not much fancy your *Saxon* Blue. Now, Tom never fails to tell any Stranger he distrusts, who is coming to wait on Sir George, that white, or blue, is all the Fashion, so that his Honour, at the first Glance, conceives a Dislike to them so dressed, and, as they approach, turns away, and will never look at them more. The People are at their Wits End to know the Meaning of this Reception, and think it is because they are not dressed quite up to the Fashion. It was but lately Tom prevailed on fourscore Gentlemen of Sir George's Acquaintance, who had, most of them, always dressed in blue, to come before his Honour with Orange Faceings to their Cloaths, which made them so ridiculous, that they'll never forgive Tom that Trick; for he swore, if they would gratify him so far, he would for ever after wear blue himself; but he still wears the same motley Coat he ever did, which is a Mixture of all the Colours in the Rainbow.

If Tom hears his Honour speak well of any of his own Enemies, who are almost every one about Sir George, he whispers the next Man to him, so as to be heard by his Honour, 'By —, I saw that Fellow yesterday dressed 'in Mazarine blue, and a white Cockade; is he in the 'Army?'

Other Tricks he and Mr. Rock have innumerable between them; and the last has found out a Tincture more useful than that of his Name-sake the Tooth-drawer; for, though it does not cure the Gums, it cures the worst of all Itches, that of writing or scribbling, and has had marvellous Effects, as you shall hear.

Some Friends of Sir George, who lived on his Estate, at a good Distance from his Honour, and had entered into an Association to watch his Receivers, and other Officers, and do Sir George all the Service they could without Fee or Reward; took a Fancy to write their Names with red Ink; just a Whim, as all Knots and Societies have one or other Singularity. Tom hated them like Poison, because they were better *Accomptants* than the Receivers he had appointed for Sir George there, and, for another Reason, (a strange one) because they would not take Money. Now, in order to prejudice Sir George

against them, he told him, that red Ink was a Sign in Free-Masonry, which Craft his Honour some Way or other has taken a Dislike to; so when any of these Gentlemen corresponded with Sir *George*, or any one about him, *Rock* and his Master get the Letter in their Hands, and first go into a Corner by themselves, and piss upon the Superscription, then they entreat every one passing by to piss on it, till at last it becomes red, and his Honour won't open the Letter.

It sometimes happens, they find People sparing of their Urine on such an Occasion, as really it is not civil; and then *Tom* sends the Letter to a young Fellow of *Rock's* Acquaintance, who, having lived a good Part of his Life on Turnips, Niepes, *Scotch* Cale, and other active Vegetables, pisses absolute Phosphorus, and, at one Squirt, makes every Letter as scarlet as the Whore of *Babylon*, and glow, like Fire, on the Paper.

But to leave their Tricks, and return to *Tom's* Story. It is not many Years since he got himself turned off, for fibbing, or, in plain *English*, telling Sir *George* such a String of impossible Lies, that his Honour, with all his Goodness, could not help suspecting his Veracity; and there is nothing he hates so much as a Liar. And indeed he could not do other than suspect *Tom*; for he first told him, that a Monster had been seen in the *North*, who had three Heads, and so many, and such long, Legs, that he could set one Foot in *France*, another in *Sweden*, and a Third in *Spain*, with a Tail that reached over all *Germany* to *Constantinople*, eating Fire, and vomiting Smoke from his six Nostrils so terribly, that it was certain Death to come in his Way. Now, his Honour only smiled at that; for he fears neither Fire or Smoke, or all the Sulphur in the Bowels of bellowing *Ætna*; and imputed the Fright *Tom* seemed in to his Cowardice, and Strength of Fancy when he thinks there's Danger: But *Tom* went on: 'This Monster, Sir, has been christened by the Pope of *Rome*, and your Honour's Cozen with the Button-holes stood Godfather, who has promised and vowed in his Name, that he shall devour all your Lands and Houses; I fear he'll make his Words good. I request, therefore, your Honour would make up Matters with your Cozen, and beside part with your Servants, all but me and ten others, (whom he named) for I assure your Honour, they are all in Love with the Monster.' Twenty other Things did he tell Sir *George* of a Breathy
and

and spoke slightly of some of his Honour's Family, and then pretended to be frightened out of his Wits at some Plots and Contrivances to get his Honour's Tenants to attorn to Mr. *Doelittle*, (who, as you have read in the *History* above quoted, was a Pretender to Sir George's Estate) and then named forty of his best Tenants, in a Breath, as Accomplices in this felonious Design.

The greatest Whore always calls Whore first; a Pick-pocket pursued cries, as he runs, *Stop Thief*; a Sharper cautions you against Gamblers; and a *Newgate* Solicitor cries, Ay! these Attornies! On this Plan *Dunderbead* had built his Hopes of undoing Sir George's best Friends in his Honour's Opinion, and being conscious he ought to be suspected himself, pretended to suspect others. But Sir George, though he says little about it, sees well enough how the *Land lies*, and takes good Care, in the main, how he lets Matters run aground.

It happened, at that very Time, *Doelittle's* eldest Son had taken out a *feri facias*, (or made Belief he had one) and came to execute it, *Vi & Armis*, on the Chattels; and Sir George thinking it was no Time to keep *Dunderbead* about him, as, from this last Discourse, he suspected him more than ever, put him out in a Hurry, and a clever, joking, d——d sensible Fellow in his Place; one who has but three or four Faults in the World, and if he had but one Fault more, i. e. the good Opinion of his Neighbours, were absolutely the top Character of the Age. First, he is apt to laugh too much at serious Matters; secondly, he laughs at Fools rather too much, which is still more unpardonable; thirdly, he will do Things his own Way; fourthly and lastly, which comprehends the other three, he has more Sense than should come to his Share.

Reader, whoe'er you be, that happen to have more Understanding than your Comrades, know that you have a hard Card to play in the Game of Life; if you don't keep your Hand close, as well as see the Game, you're undone; your Friends, who look over, will tell your Adversary where you are weakest, and, if they have no Share in the Bets, had as lieve be d——d as see you win.

This is the Decree of Fate, and a very just one it is, that *Folly* should wage everlasting Enmity with *Sense*. What would Fools and Knaves do, if they did not stand by one another, and proscribe the common Enemy? If Nature will be a fond Parent to one, and a Stepmother to the

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the rest, be revenged on the B—ch, in the Person of her Favourite, to be even with her.

To this Piece of Morality, which seldom fails being practised, *Tom* owed his Security and Restitution to his Place. The Fools and Knaves about *Sir George* associated. One would not bring him his Horse when he had a Mind to ride; another would not undress him going to Bed; or a third serve him with Drink at Dinner, unless *Tom* was restored: Nay, it can be proved, that *Will*, the *black-shoe* Boy, swore he would piss in his Honour's Boots, instead of cleaning them, if his Master *Tom* left the House. *Sir George* saw all this Insolence, and, at another Time, had not failed to make a clear Sweep of the *Varlets*, from the *Parlour* to the *Skullery*, and from the *Bed-chamber* to the *Oflerry*; but being then in *Law*, and Term begun, and wanting a Sum of present Money, he could not raise it but by keeping *Tom* in; for Mr. *Rock*, his Man, and twenty of the Servants along with him, went to all the *Bankers* to hinder it, and swore *Sir George's* Security wasn't worth Six-pence, unless *Tom* joined in the Bond; whereas, the Truth and Fact was, that *Tom* had not Six-pence in the World to bless himself with, and *Sir George* the best Pay-master, and the most substantial Gentleman in the Neighbourhood, with the best secured Estate in the World.

However, by these Devices, *Tom* got in again, and blundered on, recommended bad Lawyers, till, at last, a good one came in spite of him, got Poundage, (though ne'er the richer for it) caused furious Bills of Cost to be made out; like the bad Steward, when the Attorney charged but *seventy Pound*, *Tom* would bid him take back his Bill and write *four-score*; and then when the Suit was over, 'Lord! what a deal of Money he had saved *Sir George!* there's a Steward for ye!' says *Will* the Shoeboy. 'The whole Cost but four-score and one Pound! a Trifle! we can pay it when we will.' *Rock* (who seldom spoke, and, when he did, it was like the old Oracle, with twenty Meanings to every Word) would say, 'Only four-score and two Pound! 'amazing! I can't comprehend how—— What's that you say, 'Will? Only four-score and three Pound! —— Yes, 'I remember my Master said so; for a troublesome Decree in our Favour!' Now, beside this Dutch Way of tossing up a Bill, the Decree did really trouble *Rock* a good deal; for he hoped it would have gone against *Sir George*,

George, that *be*, and his *Friend* with the *red Urine* before-mentioned, might be all in all with *Doelittle*, when he got Possession.

Now *Tom* did not only not pay the *four-score Pound* Principal, but he bullied the Creditors out of an *eighth Part* Interest. They grumbled to be sure, but have so great Love for *Sir George*, that they never grudge any Thing, if prudently laid out in his *Honour's* Service; and this, it will be soon found, *Tom* has built too much on; for they never intended he should skim their Money over the Water, and make Ducks and Drakes of it for Sport to every Fool in the Neighbourhood, or for a Chance to pick up a Piece or two, and praise *Tom's* Generosity for letting them pocket it when the Sport is done.

You may stretch the Thread, but it will break at last. The longest Day will have an End. The Reckoning will come when the Feast is over; and twenty other Things (if one could remember them) might be suggested to *Tom's* Consideration; but he never read the *Art of Thinking*, which (though I own it but a paltry Book) would do well enough for *Tom*, who is hardly yet in his Rudiments of *Logic*.

The *Law-suit*, as I have told you, or ought to have told you, before, being over, and charmingly conducted under *Tom's* Inspection, he grew mighty big on it. When he stood near *Sir George* at his *Levee*, he would bounce to this Side and that, with his Arms *kimbo Fashion*. He would say (*i. e.* in his Looks) to every one near him, 'Well! Haven't I brought Matters to a good Point? I believe, Sir, you little thought I could do this for *Sir George*!'

Whoever has been so happy as to see the renowned *Mr. Cibber* (as much superior to the *Roman Roscius*, as the *natural Face* is a better Index of the Passions than a *Mask*) acting the Part of *Bayes* in the *Rehearsal*; and, after a Scene of wondrous Folly, saying, 'Well, *John-sou*, this will do! Eh! *Smith*?' I say, whoever has seen that (otherwise inconceivable) Performance, whoever can recollect the *Laureat's* Look and Feature in his said Fit of Sufficiency and Satisfaction, has a true Transcript of *Tom* before his Eyes, on that memorable and mighty Occasion of Exultation and Triumph.

But here I drop (for tolerably good Reasons, as my Reader would confess, should I disclose them) a small Period of the History before me, in order to open an *Episode*, as it were, only collaterally connected with it; in which

which *Tom*, and his Man *Rock*, were the principal Actors, though behind the Curtain.

Sir George has an *Estate* so distant from his Mansion, that it has seldom been visited by any of the Family, and, till very lately, the Tenants, who occupy it, have been considered as *Savages* by his other Tenants; the Pleasantry of which consists in this, that such Tribes of *Numskulls* are not to be found in any Corner of the Globe as themselves; without *Discourse of Reason*, though Nature has given it them in common with others; but the Use they make of it distinguishes them from all the rest of the World. The uneducated Part of them are *Bears*, unlick'd and shapeless as Nature was in *Chaos*. The improved Part as remote from *Nature* as human Invention can carry them.

These competent Judges, and perfect Masters of human Life, entertained, as I have told you, a wondrous Contempt for these distant Tenants, and, till lately, did not care to settle among them, though sure to grow rich by it, and into some Esteem, (a Thing they were not used to at home;) but they are now more condescending. They condescend to *Banishment*, i. e. to be banished from Ale and Tobacco, good Company at Cellars and Hedge-Taverns, and, from footing it o'er the Common, to ride there in Coaches, keep Men-Cooks, and drink Claret-Wine.

One would be apt to think the World a little mended with these Adventurers. No such Thing; unhappy was their Lot, when they left sweet home, to get a Being there; and, truly, they have Reason; for it is not good for People to miswont themselves, and, *Jack will never be a Gentleman*.

These despised Folks were, however, special Tenants to *Sir George* and his Family, and they knew it full well, and had a Kindness for them; but, first, *Mr. Rock*, and, by consequence, his Master *Tom* next, conceived a mortal Hatred to them, for Causes I shall tell you.

Rock had a Brother, who was prevailed on, by an *Agent* there of *Sir George's*, to go over to him, to keep him Company during the Time of his Banishment, and to leave a very good Prospect he had at home of getting one hundred Pounds *per Annum*, after half a score People should die. The *Agent* recommended him first to one Place, then another, till he mounted him so high at last, that higher could not be. In this Situation he began to look round, (or, rather, discovered his Intention) to see what Mis-

chief

chief he could do, to make him famous to Posterity. He had, by means of his *Brother*, Mr. *Rock*, *Tom's* Ear on all Occasions; and by protesting and swearing twenty Times a Day, that he loved the *Tenants*, he lived among, better than all the World beside, got some Credit among the chief of them, (but, indeed, not the wisest) and offered to become their Solicitor for any Favour with Sir *George*. His Way of soliciting was this:

To THOMAS DUNDERHEAD, Esq; Controulor-General of the Household, &c. of his Honour Sir GEORGE ENGLISH.

‘THE Bearer, Mr. *Trusty*, is a Person of great Worth, and very great Interest over all his Honour’s Estate here. Never wears any *Colours* but *Orange*, has an infinite Esteem for your Worship; and I pray you will forward him in his Suit to Sir *George*, whom he is very capable of serving, and on which Account I have interrested myself in his Success.’

I am, &c.

The Bearer, on getting these Credentials, went full of Glee to *Dunderhead* to deliver them; who, on comparing them with another Letter, would tell the Suitor, ‘This agrees perfectly with my former Accounts of you, your Business shall be done;’ *i. e.* in *Tom's* Meaning, you shall be undone with all convenient Speed: For the other Letter ran thus:

‘THE Bearer of my Letter, of the same Date with this, Mr. *Trusty*, is a desperate Villain, without any Interest here. He is a *blue* Rascal, outside and in; and would go to the D—l to compass your Destruction and mine.’

I am, &c.

It was some time before he was found out in these Tricks, and had then infallibly been cast for *Slander*, only he had some *Compurgators*, who having been deep *Blues*, and their Fathers before them, (as all the World saw) were represented by him as the truest Mixture of *Orange* and *Brunswick* that Sir *George* had on his whole Estate again; by which Means he had got them the best Bargains on the Estate, and put them so into Favour with *Tom*, that his Honour thought them, through his Description,

tion, the *truest*, *best hearted*, *sincerest*, *inoffensive* People in the World, and would not readily hearken to the contrary; though they were every Day contriving how to ruin and sink the Value of his Estate, that they might become Tenants for the whole themselves, and get *Royalties* and all in their Possession.

Tom and *Rock* laid their Shoulders to the Work; had every Day a new Story, whereby to put *Sir George* out of humour, with all his other Tenants, and to get *them* set *cock-a-boop*. But they were piteously baffled over and over, as his Honour would not proceed to *Ejection* without the usual Forms, though both *Tom*, and his Predecessors in the *Comptrollership*, had procured some little Unkindness to be done them by their Tales and Whispers; that, however, fell short of the Satisfaction on them *Tom* wanted. Nothing less would content him than ruining them, and their Posterity, for pretending to resist his sovereign Will and Pleasure, or dispute his *Prerogative* as *Controuler-General*.

These *Controulers* would be the happiest Fellows in the World, but for *two*, or, perhaps, *three* Things.

First, The supreme Felicity of their Life, in that transitory State, being *Revenge*, it always comes too slow to have the right Relish. Could *Revenge* or *Dislike* (much the same thing) be carried into Execution instantaneously with the *Idea*, they would be Demi-Gods both in Power and Bliss; but so hard is their Destiny, that they are fain to languish long in hope, ere their Wishes be accomplished, and then, may be, but by halves. I have known one of them wait (though not patiently) the Space of four Years, watching every Opportunity of getting one of his Fellow-Servants a Kick on the Breech, and when his Plot succeeded, the Happiness attending it came considerably qualified, by his receiving, at the same Time, *two* Kicks on his own Breech; and it is now ten Years since *Tom* made a Vow to God, that he would, next Day, get a young Fellow's Ears cut off, who was a great Giber at him and his motly Friends, and has not done it yet, with all his Endeavours, nor ever will, unless he gets his *Tongue* cut out first.

The *second* chosen Curse of their unpropitious Stars is, to be for ever in a Fright, by Night and by Day, at Sea or Land, haunted by *Spectres* of their own raising and starting, as if the Devil was in them, when no Harm is near. The stoutest of them all would own, to one (who told it